



WATER RESOURCES RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSAL

Title: Watershed Assessment Training Program. A Partnership in Service to New England Communities

Duration: September 1997 through August 1999

Federal Funds requested: \$75,540

Non Federal Funds: \$193,224

Principal Investigator(s):

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Jeffrey Schloss, University of New Hampshire

Linda Green, University of Rhode Island

Geoff Dates, River Watch Network.

Congressional district: MA 01

Statement of critical regional or State water problems:

We have made tremendous progress in addressing water pollution problems since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. Yet nonpoint source (NPS) pollution remains as a seemingly intractable problem. Damages include the degradation of our waters, the loss of species, reduced recreational opportunities, and threats to human health. Reduced federal, state and municipal funding sources increases the need for community based volunteer monitoring programs continues as a cost-effective means to collect credible information used in screening, assessment, base line documentation, and community decision making.

Grass roots participation is critical to the battle against NPS pollution as it will take localized effort to help reverse the trend in resource degradation. Many volunteer programs have mastered basic sampling techniques and are now at the stage where they require assistance to go the next step. They are requesting guidance on how to expand their monitoring to tackle NPS pollution at the source and how to better integrate their programs to address community concerns in the context of a watershed approach.

A 1993 New England regional conference, titled "Shared Waters & Common Goals", was held in New Hampshire to examine the barriers and opportunities for partnerships among citizen monitoring groups and government monitoring agencies. Conference participants identified the need for training and development on a region-wide basis. A consensus

recommendation was to develop a better means of communication among monitoring programs and organizations who provide service to monitoring groups.

Experienced organizations that coordinate and train volunteer monitoring programs have
1) Subject matter problems to be addressed . Subject matter:

This proposed project will produce a set of training materials for six different watershed assessment methods designed for New England volunteer environmental monitoring groups. It sets up a delivery system to ensure that training and assistance on these survey methods are provided to groups throughout the region. It also initiates a planning process among service organizations to provide comprehensive cost-effective assistance on an on-going basis to citizen monitoring programs.

Problems to be addressed:

We have made tremendous progress in addressing water pollution problems since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. However, the toughest battle still remains' dealing with nonpoint source (NPS) pollution. The damages include the degradation of our waters, the loss of species to impaired functioning of watershed ecosystems, reduced recreational opportunities and the threat to human health. With federal, state and municipal funding sources on the decline the role of community based volunteer monitoring programs continues to gain acceptance as a cost-effective means to collect credible information used in screening, assessment, base line documentation and most importantly, community decision making.

This grass roots participation is critical to the battle against NPS pollution as it will take localized effort to help reverse the trend in resource degradation. While training and support has been provided from a number of sources in regards to volunteer program development and basic sampling techniques, many programs are now at the stage where they require assistance to go the next step and are requesting guidance on how to expand their monitoring to tackle NPS pollution at the source and how to better integrate their programs to address community concerns in the context of a watershed approach.

A New England regional conference, titled "Shared Waters & Common Goals", was held in November of 1993 in Bedford, New Hampshire to examine the barriers and opportunities for partnerships among citizen monitoring groups and government monitoring agencies. The conference participants identified the need for training on a region-wide basis and to develop a better means of communication among monitoring programs and organizations who provide service to monitoring groups.

The US EPA in 1988 estimated that there were 44 volunteer water quality monitoring programs in 24 states. By 1994, this had increased to 600 volunteer programs in 45 states. We estimate that there are now about 200 volunteer programs currently in operation in New England. Since 1978, several outreach programs have been initiated to assist volunteer monitors. These include the Massachusetts Water Watch Partnership

(MassW3A~) administered by the Massachusetts Water Resources Research Center, the River Watch Network (RWN) of Montpelier Vermont, the

University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension's (UNHCE) Lakes Lay Monitoring Program, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension's (UMCE) Clean Water Program, the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension's Watershed Watch (URIWW), and the Merrimack River Watershed Council's (MRWC) Volunteer Environmental Monitoring Program (VEMN). These organizations comprise the applicants for this proposal.